

# THE ARCHIBULL PRIZE GOOD HEALTH AND WELL BEING LESSON RESOURCE

## #3

### [Impacts of COVID-19 on children and young people who contact Kids Helpline](#)

Sixteen children and young people raised concerns of racism related to COVID-19 during their contact with Kids Helpline. While only a few children and young people raised these concerns, their experiences reflect the serious impacts this can have on children and young people.

Most of these concerns were raised in contacts made to the Kids Helpline in February-March, decreasing in April, perhaps a reflection of increased social distancing and school closures.

Concerns about experiences of racism related to COVID-19 were raised almost entirely by children and young people from CALD backgrounds.

The age group with the largest number of concerns related to racism was the 15-17 age group. Both males and females raised these concerns. However, it was raised more frequently by males.

This concern reflects reports of racism directed at people of Chinese and Asian background since the beginning of the pandemic. In February 2020, the Commission recorded more complaints under the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) (RDA) than at any other time over the past 12 months. One third of all the complaints under the RDA made to the Commission since the start of February have been related to COVID-19.<sup>17</sup> However, it is important to remember the Commission's data only captures the complaints it receives that allege a breach of the RDA, and the volume of these is fairly small in statistical terms. This highlights the need for better reporting of racial abuse.

Some children and young people who raised this concern spoke about their personal experiences as a young person of Asian background, especially Chinese and Vietnamese background, which included name-calling, ostracism and threats at school. Some young people expressed uncertainty about whether they had experienced racism from other children and young people and were questioning their experiences.

Some children and young people raised concerns about hearing reports of racism against people of Asian background on the news. Others were concerned that their parents or others they knew of Asian background might become targets of racism during COVID-19.

Other issues included witnessing racism perpetrated by others online and expressing anger towards people of Chinese background.

#### Case studies:

### Experiences of racism related to COVID-19

'Henry', aged 14, rang Kids Helpline to say that he has been hearing a lot in the news about racism against Chinese people because of the virus. His dad is from a Chinese background, and he looks a lot like him. He has noticed that at his school people have been taking more notice of his Chinese heritage, making jokes. His friends also seem to be ignoring him and not returning his texts. He is not sure whether he is overreacting, but it is making him feel sad and anxious.

'Sara', aged 17, contacted Kids Helpline to say she was worried about going to school that day due to fears of getting COVID-19. She also said that she and some of her friends had experienced harassment because they were from China and were told they were responsible for it. She wasn't sure how to respond to these situations and wondered if she found it harder because she had anxiety. The racism was impacting on her self-worth.

'Toan', aged 15, told Kids Helpline that there is a culture of bullying and racism at his school. He is of Vietnamese background. Though he has not personally experienced a lot of bullying, he said that today some kids in an older grade had said to him 'here comes coronavirus' and when he said it wasn't funny, they acted aggressively and threatened him, which made him scared.